

Message Text

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65-61

ACTION ARA-10

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USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 3217

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MASS, GT

SUBJECT: GUATEMALA AIR FORCE PURCHASE OF C-47'S

REF: A) STATE 138416, G) GUATEMALA 2906, C) GUATEMALA 1453

1. WE FULLY UNDERSTAND BRITISH SENSITIVITY TO ANY SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OF GUATEMALA MILITARY CAPABILITY, PARTICULARLY PARATROOP LIFT CAPACITY. EVEN IF, AS WE BELIEVE, GOG HAS NO PRESENT PLANS USE THAT CAPABILITY AGAINST BELIZE, ITS POSSESSION STRENGTHENS GUATEMALA ABILITY TO CARRY OUT ANY FUTURE PLANS IT MAY DEVELOP. WE AGREE THAT SUBJECT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED FULLY AND FRANKLY WITH HMG. HOWEVER, WE THINK HMG'S CONCERN MAY BE SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED. KEY POINTS DEPARTMENT MAY WISH MAKE TO UK, AND WHICH SHOULD IN ANY EVENT BE CENTRAL TO OUR OWN CONSIDERATION OF PROBLEM, ARE, FIRST, THAT UNITED STATES DOES NOT RPT NOT CONTROL GUATEMALA'S ABILITY TO PURCHASE MILITARY EQUIPMENT, AS ARAVA PURCHASE AMPLY DEMONSTRATES; AND, SECOND, THAT COURSE OF ACTION WE RECOMMENDED IN REF. B DOES NOT RPT NOT IN OUR JUDGEMENT POSE AN UNACCEPTABLE RISK TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE BELIZE PROBLEM.

2. WE DO NOT REPT NOT BELIEVE THAT KEEPING OUR COMMIT-
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MENT TO SELL GUATEMALA FIVE USED C-47'S, NOR THE ISRAELI SALE OF TEN ARAVAS, NOR THE TWO COMBINED, WOULD THREATEN THE PEACE OF THE AREA. IF ARAVA PURCHASE GOES THROUGH AS SCHEDULED, WE ESTIMATE THAT GOG COULD, WITH A SURGE LOGISTICAL EFFORT, MOVE APPROXIMATELY HALF A BATTALION (250 MEN) FROM SOME NEARBY GUATEMALA AIRFIELD TO BELIZE CITY. ADDITIONAL FIVE C-47'S WOULD ENABLE THEM TO MOVE PERHAPS ANOTHER HUNDRED MEN. ORIGINAL "PEACE MAY" PROGRAM WOULD HAVE GIVEN THEM CAPABILITY OF MOVING ABOUT 200 IN ALL. BUT ESSENTIAL POINT IS THAT THREAT, IF ANY, LIES NOT IN SMALL NUMBERS OF TROOPS AND SMALL NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT, BUT IN INTENTIONS OF GOG. AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, WE BELIEVE THAT GUATEMALA IS MAKING A SINCERE EFFORT TO REACH A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO BELIZE ISSUE AND HAS NO CURRENT AGGRESSIVE PLANS WITH REGARD TO BELIZE. NO ONE CAN GUARANTEE FUTURE, BUT PURCHASES PRESENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION DO NOT IN OUR VIEW INCREASE GUATEMALAN CAPABILITY TO POINT WHERE AGGRESSIVE MILITARY ACTION BECOMES SIGNIFICANTLY EASIER OR MORE ATTRACTIVE TO GOG.

3. GUATEMALAN DECISION TO PURCHASE ARAVAS WITHOUT PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH USG IS IN OUR VIEW ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF GROWING TREND IN GOG TOWARD NATIONALISTIC ASSERTIVENESS AND GROWING DESIRE TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INDEPENDENCE. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH US, HE IS AT THE SAME TIME STRONGLY NATIONALISTIC. GOG HAS SHOWN IT DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT IT MUST CLEAR WITH USG ALL PLANNED PURCHASES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. IT DID NOT AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THAT PEACE MAY WAS INTENDED TO BE A US IMPOSED CEILING ON ITS TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT CAPABILITY. GUATEMALANS SAW IT ONLY AS A CEILING ON ONE TYPE OF AIRCRAFT THAT ONE SUPPLIER, THE US, WAS WILLING TO PROVIDE.

4. WE DO NOT RPT NO BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE EMBASSY TO ASK GOG WHAT ITS "FINAL INTENTIONS" ARE WITH RESPECT TO NUMBERS AND UTILIZATION OF LIGHT TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT OR TO REQUEST THE TYPE OF SWEEPING REVIEW ALLUDED TO IN REF. A. WE BELIEVE WE HAVE ALREADY

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OBTAINED (REF C) AS MUCH AS WE ARE LIKELY TO GET, AND PROBABLY AS MUCH AS GOG ITSELF KNOWS ABOUT ITS FUTURE INTENTIONS. WE ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT AN OFFER ON OUR PART OF FIVE C-47'S WILL SATISFY THEIR INTEREST AND EXHAUST THEIR OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES (PILOTS AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES) FOR NEAR FUTURE. BEYOND THAT NO ONE CAN SAY.

5. A FINAL US DECISION, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD TAKE INTO
ACCOUNT BRITISH REACTIONS AFTER A DETAILED AND OPEN
DISCUSSION WHICH PRESUMABLY SHOULD TAKE PLACE AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE.

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